

La Cinémathèque de Toulouse



CINE-CONCERT  
**AELITA**  
**QUEEN OF MARS**



**Musical score: STEREOPOP ORCHESTRA**

La Cinémathèque de Toulouse

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## THE FILM

### **AELITA**

Yakov Protazanov

1924. USSR. 103 min. Black & white. 35 mm. Silent. Russian inserts subtitled in French.

Cast: Igor Ilinski, Youlia Solntseva, Nicolas Tsereteli, Vera Orlova

The very first Soviet science-fiction film: the story of a young man, Los, traveling to Mars in a rocket ship, where he leads a popular uprising against the ruling group of Elders, with the support of Queen Aelita who has fallen in love with him after watching him through a telescope. This film was shot in order to compete with the foreign “blockbusters” of the time, especially through the sets and the costumes.



## THE DIRECTOR



A highly successful moviemaker both before and after the revolutions of 1917, Yakov Alexandrovich Protazanov (1881-1945) began his career in 1907 as an actor and script-writer, becoming a director in 1911. In 1913 he and Vladimir Gardin co-directed the biggest box-office sensation of early Russian cinema, *The Keys to Happiness*, based on Anastasia Verbitskaya's best-selling novel. Protazanov was the master of the cinematic melodrama. While he preferred to adapt his screenplays from popular literature, he also scored major hits with classics like *War and Peace* (1915), *The Queen of Spades* (1916), and *Father Sergius* (1918). His last Russian "sensation" before he moved to France in 1920 was *Satan Triumphant* (1917), which Soviet critics considered the epitome of bourgeois decadence.

Protazanov quickly established himself in the West and made six pictures before he returned to Soviet Russia in 1923. He worked for

Mezhrabpom-Rus, a quasi-independent company that focused on profits as well as politics.

Protazanov's skillfully made, highly entertaining, and superficially politicized blockbusters gave the studio the profits it needed to support the more revolutionary (but less profitable) work of young Soviet filmmakers like Vsevolod Pudovkin.

Protazanov's most important Soviet movies were *Aelita* (1924), *His Call* (1925), *The Tailor from Torzhok* (1925), *The Case of the Three Million* (1926), *The Forty-First* (1927), and *Don Diego and Pelageia* (1928). Throughout the 1920s, Protazanov displayed a finely tuned talent for social satire. He also introduced talented actors such as Nikolai Batalov, Igor Ilinsky, Anatoly Ktorov, and Yulia Solntseva to the Soviet screen.

Satire was definitely out of favor in the political climate of the 1930s. In the final decade of his long career in the movies, Protazanov marshaled his skills as an actor's director to make "realist" movies, returning to the classics for his most notable success, *Without a Dowry* (1937).

Protazanov's history is one of the most remarkable survival tales in Soviet cinema.

## THE MUSICIANS

### STEREOPOP ORCHESTRA

**Ericnemo:** guitar, piano, violin, organ, balalaika, theremin, vocals.

**Sébastien Comet:** drums, micro-korg, electronics, samplers.

**Laurent Boulhabel:** sound and mixing



**Ericnemo** is a passionate singer, composer and songwriter who plays many instruments. Not only does he write songs and arrangements but he also composes for sound installations as well as soundtracks for the cinema.

**Sébastien Comet** is a composer who also plays drums and keyboards. He is a subtle and complete musician.

Their association gives rise to a music influenced by the pop music of the 60s and 70s. The Stereopop Orchestra is a musical laboratory which creates its own singular world at the junction of rock, folk, experimental electro and psychedelic music.

Regarding *Aelita's* soundtrack, the band's work went beyond the simple frame of a cine-concert; together, they wrote a score for a film that never had one before. They managed to provide a language to the film.

By producing atmospheres that are sometimes noisy, electric, melancholic or cosmic, their composition brings to light how modern this movie is. The energy and the sensitive approach of the live music performance bring a new intimate insight to this work of art.

